

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
IMMIGRATION SERVICE

DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS
913-922 MILLS BLDG.

IN ANSWERING REFER TO

No. 5072/2

Commissioner-General of Immigration,
Washington, D. C.

261/276

OFFICE OF SUPERVISING INSPECTOR
MEXICAN BORDER DISTRICT
(TEX., N. MEX., ARIZ., AND SO. CAL.)
EL PASO, TEXAS

August 12, 1920

There are inclosed herewith copy of communication addressed to this office under date of the 30th ultimo, by the inspector in charge at Laredo, copy of one addressed by the same officer on the same date to Dr. Goddard, State Health Officer, Austin, Texas, and copy of a letter addressed today by this office to Dr. Goddard, all dealing with an invitation extended to the inspector in charge at Laredo by Dr. Goddard to participate in, or detail a representative to participate in, a conference of Health Officers to be held at Galveston on the 4th instant for the purpose of discussing border conditions, with special reference to plague and quarantine matters.

Now perhaps is as good a time as any to inform the Bureau that the unprotected condition of the border is a subject which is receiving more and more attention as time goes on, and no evidence is visible of any prospect that the Immigration Service will do any more than it is now doing to remedy the situation, the seriousness of which has been urged in innumerable communications and reports from this office.

The Immigration Service on the border won for itself an enviable reputation during the period in which its forces were at maximum strength. All Departments of the Government looked to it, and not in vain, to prevent the surreptitious entry of aliens. The Immigration Patrol, which was established

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during the period referred to and which unfortunately was greatly curtailed at the close of June 30, 1919, and completely abolished at the close of August 18, 1919, performed wonderfully effective service,--a service unparalleled in the history of affairs on the Mexican Border.

It is but natural that the reaction which set in with the withdrawal of the Patrol, and which apparently has not yet reached its limit, is occasioning ever increasing adverse criticism, not only on the part of Federal and State Officials but on the part of the lawfully disposed elements of the public in general. Practically every form of lawlessness on the border with which Federal and State authorities are concerned, has its origin or can be traced to violations of the Immigration Act. Renegades crossing the border from Mexico in raids on peaceful communities or on cattle stealing expeditions are usually aliens--Mexicans; persons clandestinely entering the United States bringing personal belongings or effects carrying contagion are in the same class. The same may be said of those who surreptitiously introduce cotton or cotton seed carrying boll weevil infection. Liquor smugglers are in the same class. The illustrations might be carried out ad infinitum. Sufficient has been said, it is believed however, to show how vitally and directly the Immigration Service is concerned, and unless the Immigration Service is rehabilitated and restored to its former status as an effective instrumentality for the suppression of these various forms of lawlessness, it is not difficult to conceive that some other agency will in the not distant future be created to deal with the situation. The Customs Service, the Prohibition Service, the Public Health Service, the Agricultural Department, the Bureau of Animal Indus-

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try, the Department of Justice and the Army, are all directly concerned and each in a way is responsible for the enforcement of certain laws along the border having to do with the entry and exit of certain classes people or commodities. The Public Health Service, for instance, has no more quarrel with the Immigration Service than the Immigration Service has with the Public Health Service. It is the duty, as this office understands it, of the Public Health Service to effectively maintain quarantine against the introduction of diseases into the United States from foreign countries. There is just as much reason seemingly for the Public Health Service to assume the responsibility of keeping out diseased aliens along the border as there is for this service so to do, and the analogy may properly be extended to each one of the various services referred to.

The fact remains, however, that every Department of the Government, State and Federal, and the public as well, consider first and above everything else, the fact that the violators being in the main aliens, it is primarily and fundamentally the duty of the Immigration Service to look after them.

As this office views the situation, nothing would be gained by sending a representative of this service to the Galveston conference. If one attended, he would be placed in the very embarrassing position of having to admit that the border is wide open between the stations from one end to the other; that sufficient men and money have not been supplied to effectively administer the immigration laws on the border.

Sooner or later some Department of the Government will be compelled to take hold of things on the Mexican Border and enforce the various Federal laws, and the writer hopes the Immigration Service will not be required to take a

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back seat, but unless it provides the means to enforce its laws it is inevitable that it will be relegated to the background. Cannot the Bureau do something to meet this critical situation?

JS.

Incl. 21727.

J. W. Beers

Supervising Inspector.

